

BRIEFER ARTICLES

ELLSWORTH JEROME HILL

(WITH PORTRAIT)

E. J. HILL was a well known figure to the Chicago group of botanists. For over 40 years he studied the plants of the Chicago region. No one was more familiar with them, or had brought so many of them to general notice. He was much more than a collector and taxonomist; in addition, he was an ecologist before ecology was recognized as a subject.

He was born at LeRoy, New York, December 1, 1833, and died in Chicago, January 22, 1917. His early life was spent on a farm, in which environment he began to develop his love of natural history. At the age of 19 he was taken suddenly lame by an affection of the knee, and during the rest of his long life, with intervals of relief, this trouble accompanied him. After his first trouble, to get away from the northern winter, he went to Mississippi and taught for three years in a woman's college at Grenada, afterward returning to New York. In 1860 he began a theological course in Union Theological Seminary, graduated in 1863, and engaged in pastoral work until 1869, when another attack of lameness incapacitated him for two years. He then became a teacher again, first in the high school of Kankakee, Illinois, for four years, and then for fourteen years in the high school of Englewood, now a part of Chicago. In 1888 he gave up teaching and devoted himself almost entirely to botany.



Hill's experience as a persistent field student is a lesson in patience and courage. His numerous field trips on crutches and afterward with canes; his devices to overcome the handicap of lameness while collecting; his persistence in making these trips even when he paid a severe penalty for exposure or over-exertion—all testify to the spirit of the man. During his later years he was a constant and welcome visitor at the weekly meetings of the Botanical Club of the University of Chicago, and was always intensely interested in the various phases of modern botany. His mind was open and progressive, turned toward the future of his subject rather than toward the past.

His bibliography as published includes 162 titles, ranging in time from 1870 to 1916, and covering all the phases of botany that would attract the attention of an active field man with broad interests. This journal published 34 of his titles, the majority of them during the decade 1880-1890, and the last one in 1910. Certain genera received his critical attention, among them being *Potamogeton*, *Carex*, *Quercus*, *Prunus*, *Salix*, and *Crataegus*. Taxonomists will recognize the fact that these are difficult genera, but it was their difficulty that attracted.

The Hill Herbarium, which is said to include 16,000 sheets, the accumulation of years of critical work, has been secured by the University of Illinois. It represents probably the most valuable single collection of Illinois plants, especially of the Chicago region, and it is fortunate that it has been made available in a public institution.—J. M. C.

RESISTANCE OF SEED COATS OF *ABUTILON THEOPHRASTI* TO INTAKE OF WATER

In the fall of 1910 I gathered seeds of *Abutilon Theophrasti* (velvet leaf) near Manhattan, Kansas, placed them in vials of 100 seeds each, covered them with water, and stoppered the vials. The results in the various vials up to the present time have been very similar.

In one vial 32 seeds had swollen within the first 3 weeks and were removed from the vial. During the past 6 years 22 of the remaining seeds have swollen and were removed, sometimes in a decaying condition, as the vial was seldom examined. In December 1916 a desk in which the vial was stored was removed to a small room and placed near a radiator where the temperature rose much higher than any to which the seeds had previously been subjected. Within a week 22 seeds had swollen. These were removed and placed under germinating conditions